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AP Literature and Composition

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Othello: Excuse

To Those Above Othello Back in Venice:

Please excuse the actions of Othello that have occurred in the past three days. Great peril has come to him and those surrounding him on the island of Cyprus. The wretched Iago, previous ancient and lieutenant to the great Othello, was the initial culprit of the trouble. Although the arrival at Cyprus was a joyous event, the past few days have been quite the opposite.

To relay the events, we begin with the fact that Othello most recently selected Michael Cassio to be his lieutenant over Iago, who was selected to be his ancient. Outraged, we assume that Iago took it upon himself to destroy Othello’s happiness, therein conjuring an awful story that Desdemona, Othello’s beloved bride, has been unfaithful with Cassio. Othello’s anger and jealousy accumulated over the span of three days when it made its dreadful peak on the night of the third day.

Before that awful night, Othello experienced an outburst of rage in public. Preceding the event, Iago cruelly engaged a conversation with his general on the subject matter of Desdemona and Cassio. Iago told Othello that he was going to discuss Desdemona with Cassio and he invited Othello to observe, but not listen to, the conversation. Thus, as the conversation took place, Othello’s jealousy and rage increased and he proclaimed to himself “Now he denies it faintly, and laughs it out” as Cassio chuckled at something Iago had said (IV.i.12). All the while, Othello believes that Cassio is laughing about his secret relations with Desdemona, when he is in fact laughing about his lover, Bianca. After the conversation between Iago and Cassio, Othello was further convinced and outraged that Cassio and Desdemona are being unfaithful. Later, Othello met his dear Desdemona in the street and immediately began his accusations of his wife’s infidelity. In this outburst, stress and false-jealousy caused the usually noble man to strike his wife. While striking her was a very wrong act, excuse must be granted to dear Othello fore it was not his own choosing to have the false actions of Iago lead him to doing such a terrible deed to the woman he loved.

Continuing on, Othello’s anger only continued to grow into the third day. By this time, a plan had been set in motion for Iago to kill Cassio and Othello to murder his wife. Iago decided to have the idiot Roderigo commit the act for him while Othello came to the conclusion that he would strangle and smother his wife. Eventually, the time came for when Roderigo would attempt to murder Cassio and give Othello the signal to kill Desdemona. However, Roderigo fails to slay Cassio, and Iago does so instead. Afterwards, Othello kills his wife. In the moments leading up to her death, Desdemona continues to plead “have mercy on me!” in response to Othello’s harsh accusations (V.ii.33). She claims that she only has love for him and no one else, but Othello is crazed and does not believe her. He continues and succeeds in his task of murdering his wife.

Murder is not forgivable action, but Othello must be excused for his involvement in the death of Desdemona. He was unfairly manipulated by a malicious outside source with cruel intentions. If anyone deserves castigation, it is the unkind Iago. Othello would never have committed such sins of striking and killing his own wife without the provocation provided in Iago’s lies concerning Desdemona and Cassio. Feeling deep remorse and guilt, I must tell you that the great Othello has turned his knife upon himself and lays slain beside his lifeless wife. Please excuse him in death and let him rest in peace for he admits to being too much in love, too easily outraged, and unfairly manipulated (V.ii.343-361). I truly hope that you take all that I have relayed into consideration as you decide how to deal with the death of our great and noble leader.

Sincerely yours,

A Concerned and Omniscient AP Literature Student